

The Arms of Moravia and Silesia

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Moravia and Silesia are historical lands which nowadays create the eastern part of the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, the major part of Silesia belongs to contemporary Poland, a smaller part belongs to Saxony. Moravia as a margraviate and Silesia as a duchy belonged as integral parts to the Holy Roman Empire and were feudally dependent on the Czech king, later on the Habsburg and Prussian state. Their historical lines projected in that aspect that their coats of arms exist in two versions.

1. The Moravian arm

The Moravian arm consists of the blue background on which the chequered eagle with golden weapons¹ and with a golden heraldic crown is shown. Two versions of chequering the eagle were used in the history. The original chequering from the 13th century was silver-and-red coloured.

The Moravian arm was amended by changing the silver chequering to a golden one on the base of the Moravian armorial gazette of the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Frederick III from the year 1642 as gratitude for the military help of the Moravian margrave Georg from Kunštát and Poděbrady.² Nevertheless, the silver-and-red chequering was used henceforward. Frederick's amendment was confirmed by the emperor and Moravian margrave Ferdinand II on 26. 6. 1628.

By depiction of the arm of the Holy Roman Empire with the arms of the quaternions of the Empire where the arm of the Moravian margraviate was always depicted the silver-and-white variation was used henceforward. The quaternions were not involved in the positive law of the Empire, however they served as a symbolic expression of the four component units of the Empire where behind the batch of the arms of the four profane electors (Czech, Saxon, Brandenburg, Palatinate), four dukes (Brunswick, Lorraine, Swabian, Bavarian) also the batch of four arms of the margraves was depicted (Moravian, Meissen, Brandenburg, Baden).³

The silver-and-red variation is also used in the jewel of the arm of the Hungarian district Somogy. This arm was conferred upon this district by the Hungarian king and Moravian margrave Vladislav Jagello by a gazette from the 6. 1. 1498. It is the first arm of the Hungarian district, other districts used for the district gazettes arms and signets of the main four district officials. The reason for placing the eagle into the arm of the Hungarian district is unclear but the armorial gazette expressly mentions that the arm was requested by the Somogy district administrator.⁴

The silver-and-red variation of the Moravian eagle was used onwards as well in the middle and big Habsburg coats of arms and also the Land Assembly did so till the year 1848. The only exception was the Moravian land arm with the gold-and-red chequered eagle on the flag of the Moravian regiment of the Czech-Moravian-Silesian legion of the archduke Karl from the year 1800. Another exception was the court decree from 31. 7. 1807 issued by request of the Moravian Estates which adjusted the land arm on the uniforms of the Moravian troops with gold-and-red chequering.⁵

¹ Weapon is a heraldic expression for parts of body of the animals which can be used as weapons to fight. In case of birds these are claws, pecker and tongue.

² JOSEF VÁLKA: *Středověká Morava, Vlastivěda moravská 5, Dějiny Moravy I*, Brno 1991, p. 156-157.

³ FRANTIŠEK PÍCHA: Moravský znak v systému kvaternionů Římské říše, *Genealogické a heraldické informace* 2009, Brno 2010, p. 55-71.

⁴ ZDENKO G. ALEXÝ: Moravská orlice ve znaku uherské župy, *Genealogické a heraldické informace* 2009, Brno 2010, p. 126-127 + color plate.

⁵ The flag is depicted on the back side of the cover of the *Genealogické a heraldické informace* 2009, Brno 2010.

The Moravian Land Assembly decided upon the use of gold-and-red chequering in the year 1848, which also confirmed the letter from the minister of interior and the prime minister count Edward Francis Joseph Taaffe to the Moravian governor Franz Kallina von Urbanow from 25. 5. 1880. The original silver-and-gold chequering was however used in the big and middle coats of arms of the Habsburgs till the public notice of the prime minister came into force on 3. 11. 1915 when the public notice expressly determined that the empire arm would gain the gold-and-red chequering (it was originally the middle arm because the big arm had not been used since the Habsburgs lost the colonial possession in Italy). Nevertheless, already before without any legal background the gold-and-red chequered eagle on a lengthwise divided coat of arms with the arm of Silesia started to appear on the middle Habsburg arm.⁶ The arm dualism existed till the year 1915 when the Moravian eagle had a gold-and-white chequering on the Empire arm and the land bodies used the gold-and-red chequering from which also the Moravian flag developed which is created by two stripes – the upper yellow colored and the bottom red one.⁷

In the year 1918 the exclusive silver-and-red chequering of the Moravian eagle in blue field started to be used because it stems from the typical Slavonic colors – red, white and blue. This variation was used on the middle and big arm of the Czechoslovak republic and also separately as an arm of the Moravian land. After the year 1928 when Silesia and Moravia joined together into the Moravian-Silesian land both the arms were used together (in alliance) whereas the Moravian arm was heraldically on the right side and the Silesian arm was on the left side.⁸

Nowadays the silver-and-red eagle is contented in the big arm of the Czech Republic and in the arm of the Olomouc region, Zlin region, Moravian-Silesian region, Pardubice region and the Region of Vysočina (Highlands). The South Moravian region uses in the 1st quadrant the silver-and-red Moravian eagle and in the 4th quadrant the gold-and-red one on the quadrisected coat of arms bestowed in the year 2004. The Council of the South Moravian region approved the interpretation of the symbolic of the arm of the region, initiating both the variations of colors of the Moravian eagle *“means the end of the disputes between various language, religious and ethnic groups of people living in the south of Moravia, especially between the Czech and German speaking inhabitants. It is symbol of reconciliation and integration. Whoever can profess to the south Moravia. It does not matter which nationality, mother tongue or religion the person has.”*⁹ Since there appeared some disputes concerning the attributes of the region city of Brno, which however did not concern the variations of the

⁶ Court decree from the 22. 6. 1836 describes the chequering of the Moravian eagle as silver-and-red, according to report 261/A from 1880 it is a gold-and-red one. Change of colors in the year 1915 was made on the base of the monarch's cabinet bill from the 10. 10. 1915 and the following public notice of the government No. 327/1915 Coll. with effect from the 3. 11. 1915. FRANTIŠEK ČAPKA: *Dějiny Moravy v datech*, Brno 2001, p. 63 and 145. Ottův slovník naučný, fascicle 17, p. 677. <http://zamoravu.eu/mno-k-morave/moravske-barvy-a-symboly/>, http://peter-diem.at/History_2/his2.htm

⁷ By describing the flags the expression white and yellow color is used although heraldically it is a silver and golden metal. The Moravian flag served during the 1st Czechoslovak Republic as a compromise by flying the flag when the Czech oriented people flew the white-and-blue-and-red flag and later the Czechoslovak flag while the major part of German speaking people preferred the Moravian land flag, which was accepted by the Czech people as a sufficient expression of loyalty. More closely JANA KVAPILOVÁ: *Všední den rodiny Boos-Waldeck z Vizovic v 1. polovině 20. století*, *Genealogické a heraldické informace* 2009, p. 31.

⁸ IVAN ŠTARHA: „Znak“ země Moravskoslezské, *Genealogické a heraldické informace* 2001, p. 77-78. decision of the Presidium of the Land office in Brno from the 22. 5. 1930 sg. 14 188/pres. which also laid down that land institutions and enterprises would mention only the expression „land“ and omit the words „Moravian“ or „Silesian“.

⁹ Resolution of the Council of the South Moravian region from the 23. 8. 2001 No. 445/01/R 26.

Moravian arm, the arm was conferred upon Brno in 2003.¹⁰ Besides the above mentioned regions the territory of Moravia is also situated in the South Bohemian region (Dačice district, Slavonice district) which however does not dispose of the Moravian eagle in its arm.

2. Silesian arm

The Silesian arm stems from the arm of the princes of Vratislav. The original arm of the Piast princes was emblemized by the uncrowned black eagle with a silver half-moon with a perisoneum¹¹ at its end and with a cross in the middle on golden arm. From this arm the arm of Lower Silesia and also of the whole Silesia evolved. The eagle had usually black weapons, in some cases golden ones.¹² The Czech kings used this eagle as well as far as they wanted to show their position as Silesian dukes.

Variations of the Silesian arm originated after division of Silesia in the 18th century. The Hohenzollern Silesian duchy overtook the original Silesian eagle, however the eagle was crowned with a ducal crown and disposed of golden weapons, only the tongue was red.¹³ Nowadays the eagle with black weapons is in the arm of the Lower Silesian duchy. Uncrowned eagle with red weapons is contained in the right field of the Saxon Land District Görlitz which covers the territory of the Lower Silesia in current German Saxony.¹⁴

By contrast the Habsburg Silesia was called the Duchy Upper and Lower¹⁵ Silesia (for short Silesian Duchy) and the eagle with red weapons was crowned with a heraldic crown in order to distinguish these two eagles. This Habsburg Silesian eagle overcame to the national emblem of the Czechoslovakia and nowadays it is used in the state coat of arms of the Czech Republic and in the regional arms of the Moravian Silesian region and the Olomouc region. The Silesian flag stems from the colors of the eagle and the arm, this flag is created by two stripes – above a black stripe and below a yellow one.

¹⁰ The chairman of the Chamber of Deputies conferred the arm upon the South Moravian region on the base of his decision No. 31 from the 25. 11. 2003.

¹¹ Perisoneum (spring) is a remainder of a metal tape which originally fastened the plastic picture of the eagle to the arm, which consequently got to the arm itself.

¹² Arm of Silesia in the Atlas of Willem Bleau from the year 1645. Subject word: „Ślask, Polish Wikipedia <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%9A%C4%85sk>

¹³ MILAN BUBEN: *Encyklopedie heraldiky*, 3. edition Praha 1999, ISBN 80-85983-68-0, color plate Arms of the Prussian provinces.

¹⁴ FRANTIŠEK PÍCHA: *Český lev v novém znaku, Genealogické a heraldické informace 2009*, Brno 2010, p. 125-126.

¹⁵ The Lower Silesia contents the southern part of the Nisa Duchy, the current district Jeseník in the Olomouc region of the Czech Republic.